

**MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 7, 2016**

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Eric Prause, Chairman Andy Kidd, Vice Chairman Michael Stebe, Secretary Jessica Scorso
Alternate Members Sitting:	Teresa Ike
Alternate Members:	Patrick Kennedy
Absent:	Timothy Bergin Julian Stoppelman
Also Present:	Gary Anderson, Director of Planning Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner Matthew Bordeaux, Environmental Planner Karen Logan, Recording Secretary
Time Convened:	7:01 P.M.

Mr. Prause opened the meeting by introducing Commission members.

ST. JAMES CHURCH – Request a special exception modification under art. II Sec. 4.02.02 for renovations to the St. James Church at 896 Main Street. - Special Exception Modification (2016-113)

Mr. Charles Crocini of Manchester described the major renovations being planned for St. James Church. He cited the goals of the renovations, which were to build an addition to provide handicapped access and restrooms on the main level of the church; to build an addition on the south side of the church; to install a fence to enclose a relocated HVAC unit; and to modify and relocate an existing walkway near the proposed addition.

Mr. Crocini introduced Mr. Jeff Burkhart of FLB Architecture & Planning, 19 Silver Lane, East Hartford, Connecticut, who provided more detail regarding the proposed renovations to the church. He began by describing the building addition and associated floor plans, which were intended to provide a secure, sheltered and handicapped accessible entrance to the lower church hall. Plans for the building addition include a new double door entrance with a canopy with a stained glass window. The renovations also include rebuilding the existing basement stairway.

Mr. Burkhart continued by discussing the plans to rebuild the foundation walls by adding concrete to buttress the existing stone, which is allowing water to come in. He showed the current location of the HVAC condenser unit and noted that the plan calls for relocating the unit and constructing a fence to enclose it. The unit will need to be moved during the remedial work to be performed on the foundation.

Mr. Stebe asked Mr. Burkhart to review the proposed work on the walkway. Mr. Burkhart showed the location of the walkway on his plans and noted that the updated walkway would provide safer access for parishioners.

Mr. Stebe asked if the handicapped bathroom was on the second floor and how people would get to other levels in the church. Mr. Burkhart replied that there is an elevator available.

Mr. Prause asked Mr. Burkhart to show the exact location of the new addition and asked if the plan called for adding any rooms. Mr. Burkhart explained the location of the new addition and indicated that the plans did not call for adding rooms, but the intent was to cover an exposed stairway and to make the bathroom handicapped accessible.

Mr. Prause asked where the walkway would be expanded. Mr. Burkhart stated that the walkway was located on the south side of the building and it would be expanded to provide an apron or ramp area in front of the double doors of the church.

Mr. Prause asked if Mr. Burkhart was familiar with the special exception criteria relevant to this request, such as neighborhood compatibility, safety considerations, and traffic patterns. Mr. Burkhart responded that the only area he felt might change under the special exception criteria would be the expanded apron of pavement in front of the door and the covered stairway, which both serve to increase the safety factor.

Mr. Prause asked if the materials being used were comparable to the existing materials on the building. Mr. Burkhart stated that was correct.

Mr. Prause called for staff comments. Ms. Bertotti stated that the applicant was aware of the outstanding comments, which were technical in nature and related to updating plans. She also pointed out that the church predated the zoning regulations. However, any building modifications have to be reviewed and approved by the Commission.

Mr. Prause asked if there was any landscaping planned as part of the renovations. Mr. Burkhart responded that a large oak tree will remain and some overgrown fir trees will be removed along the foundation in order to allow for that work to proceed.

Mr. Stebe offered that the application is fairly straightforward and the addition will be a benefit.

Mr. Prause commented that there would be no impact to environmental concerns or public safety and the changes were suitable for the location.

Special Exception Modification (2016-113)

MOTION: Mr. Stebe moved to approve the special exception modification for renovations to the St. James Church at 896 Main Street with the modifications as specified in staff memoranda from:

1. Raymond Myette, Jr., Design Engineer, dated November 1, 2016; and
2. Michelle Handfield, Assistant Town Engineer, dated November 1, 2016.

Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reasons for the approval are that the proposed activity meets the special exception criteria, that the materials fit the building, and that enclosing the stairways would benefit the neighborhood.

MICHAEL EVANS – For a building addition and a handicapped accessible ramp at 457 Center Street. – Design Overlay Review (2016-128)

Michael Evans of Michael Evans Home Improvement at 27 Roland Drive in East Hartford, Connecticut, presented his proposal to remove an addition from the front of 457 Center Street and construct a new 25' x 24.5' addition in the same place, and to add a handicapped accessible ramp and parking space. Mr. Evans stated that he would match the siding to the existing building to the best of his ability in order to preserve the look of the building.

Ms. Scorso asked if the decking would be changed during the renovations and Mr. Evans said that the plans called for adding on to that side of the building. Ms. Scorso continued by asking if the stairway to the second floor would be altered in any way and Mr. Evans responded that it would not.

Mr. Prause commented that the Commission would be reviewing the look of the building to compare its compatibility with the adjacent buildings. He asked Mr. Evans what the setback is for surrounding buildings. Burger King is about 75' and the apartment building is about 15', so the addition will not be any closer to the street than everyone else, he said.

Mr. Stebe asked where the sidewalk ends. Mr. Evans replied that it ends at the existing pavement.

Mr. Stebe asked how close the addition would be to the maple tree in front of the property. Mr. Evans replied that the maple tree had been removed and there was just a stump there now.

Mr. Robert Muro of A & A Pest Control, 457 Center Street, Manchester, Connecticut, introduced himself as the owner of the property. He provided Commission members with the background and history of the property, indicating that he had worked hard to improve the property since he purchased it. He continued by saying that the addition was needed for additional office space. He hired Mr. Eddy, Architect, from Coventry, Connecticut to develop the plan for the addition and they worked hard to have the addition blend in with the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Kidd commented that he was not happy with the design of the addition. He stated that it looked like there was no front of the building and it did not fit in with the surrounding buildings.

Mr. Muro disagreed. The CHR building across the street has no doors and is just a square box. He added that he could not add a door in the front of the building, as it would cost him so much space, he would not be able to put a desk in the office.

Mr. Kidd suggested that the addition be made to look more like the front of a building. He noted that he would like to see enhanced architectural features to improve the look of the building. Mr.

Muro replied that he was not willing or able to incur any additional expense. He pointed out that other buildings in the neighborhood did not blend with the neighborhood, such as Burger King.

Mr. Prause asked if there were any architectural features the applicant could add, such as dormers. Mr. Muro asked whether an additional window would help, and Mr. Evans offered that shutters could be added to the new addition.

Mr. Stebe asked if there would be any additional landscaping done in the front of the building. Mr. Muro responded that the plan called for removing a hedge and adding some plantings.

Ms. Scorso commented that she agreed with Mr. Kidd that it would be good to break up the look of the front of the addition.

Mr. Prause stated that in summary, the Commission was not thrilled with the look of the south elevation and asked if shutters could be added. Mr. Evans responded that he could add a couple of double hung windows and add shutters. Mr. Prause thought that would be better. He commented to the Commission that it would be possible to table this item and the applicant could come back with revised plans in two weeks.

Mr. Kidd suggested several ways to upgrade the look of the addition, including breaking up the look of the front by using different materials such as siding, new windows and shutters.

Design Overlay Review (2016-128)

MOTION: Ms. Ike moved to table the application to November 21, 2016. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

PLAZA AT BUCKLAND HILLS, LLC. – Request a special exception modification for exterior building renovations at the Plaza at Buckland Hills at 1524 Pleasant Valley Road. – Special Exception Modification (2016-131)

Ms. Star Duvall represented the applicant and property owner, Washington Prime Group. Ms. Duvall began by citing the three main purposes for the renovations of the plaza, which were to raise the parapet height along the mansard roof; to add lighting along the façade and in the parking lot to increase visibility and safety in those areas; and to upgrade the exterior building materials to provide continuity throughout the plaza, including the new multi-tenant building constructed earlier in 2016.

Ms. Duvall introduced Mr. Todd Evans of Create Architecture who discussed the mansard roofs, which restrict the size of the signs that tenants can place over their businesses. The renovation plan calls for raising the roof line to allow for more display space. He added that the goal is to make the look of the shopping center much more cohesive, along the lines of the newly constructed multi-tenant building. Mr. Evans went on to state that the renovations plans called for upgrading the materials and adding entrance features to some of the tenants' businesses. He noted that some of the businesses will be painted and some, such as Sally Beauty and Lane Bryant, will receive new rooflines. JoAnn's Fabrics will have new square brick columns. There are plans for music, as well as Wi-Fi in the courtyard of the shopping center.

Mr. Prause asked for clarification regarding the two businesses in the shopping center that own their own buildings, Michaels and Toys R Us. He asked how that fact affects the plans for the renovations to the center. Ms. Bertotti responded that the applicant has five years to complete the project and if some portion of the project is not completed, that portion will remain as it is today, but that portion could not be changed to anything other than what was in the proposed plans.

Mr. Prause asked about the color schemes being planned. Mr. Evans responded that the plans call for addressing each business individually, but the color schemes for the exterior facades would be along the lines of what was being proposed.

Mr. Anderson asked if the applicant had been in touch with the tenants regarding the renovation plans. Mr. Evans asserted that the applicant has been in touch with each of the businesses. Mr. Anderson asked if the applicant would be able to get an agreement from each of them and Mr. Evans responded that they were working on that.

Mr. Prause asked about the plans for lighting changes and whether the plan calls for changing the lighting throughout the shopping center or if it would just be in a few select locations. Ms. Duvall responded that the proposal calls for under cornice down-lighting for the stores with larger entrances, as well as new lighting in the parking lot.

Mr. Prause asked staff if a description of the plans for lighting changes had been received in the Planning Department and Ms. Bertotti said they had not. She continued by noting that if there were plans for changes to the lighting, she would like a detailed description filed with the Planning Department and if warranted, it would need Commission approval. Ms. Duvall replied that money had been budgeted for site lighting, but it was not necessarily part of the façade renovation package, so the applicant could come back at a later time to present detailed plans for site lighting.

Ms. Bertotti clarified that the issues before the Commission were the color scheme, materials being used, and changes to the parapet height.

Ms. Duvall noted that the color schemes being proposed were previously approved by the Commission earlier in 2016. The applicant is attempting to create a cohesive look in line with the color scheme and materials used in the newly constructed multi-tenant building.

Mr. Prause called for comments from staff and Ms. Bertotti responded that there were none.

Mr. Prause commented that the proposed renovations would modernize the roofline and standardize the look of the businesses in the shopping center.

Mr. Stebe asked if the awnings in front of Ulta and DXL would be changed or replaced. Ms. Duvall replied that the awning over Ulta would either be replaced or updated with the store's prototype. The awning over DXL would be replaced with a more durable PVC trellis.

Mr. Prause asked if the landscaping would be changed. Ms. Duvall answered that the plan calls for minor modifications in the courtyard area at the center of the shopping center.

Mr. Prause asked if the façade changes would interrupt or affect the tenants' businesses. Ms. Duvall stated that they would not. Any changes affecting the entryways for the tenants businesses would be done after hours, either before the businesses opened or after they closed. When the work requires removing the tenants' signs, the applicant plans to provide the businesses with a banner to use when the signs come down.

Ms. Bertotti noted that the Town of Manchester has very specific signage regulations, so before the applicant invests in signs, they should contact the Planning Department for guidelines.

Mr. Prause asked what the applicant would do if there is tenant resistance to the proposed changes. Ms. Duvall replied that they would try to work with the tenants to achieve a satisfactory solution.

Mr. Prause clarified the procedures required for additional improvements and noted that the only improvements the Commission would be addressing at this meeting would be the plans that had been submitted to the Planning Department.

Ms. Ike asked where in the proposal the plan states "not in scope". Mr. Sladek showed the elevations for Michael's, Pet Smart and Toys R Us.

Mr. Kidd commented that even if no work is done on Michaels and Toys R Us, their look falls in line with the proposed look of the shopping center.

Mr. Prause added that the look of the renovations proposed for the shopping center was more modern and fits in well with the new building added earlier this year.

Special Exception Modification (2016-131)

MOTION: Ms. Scorso moved to approve the special exception modification for exterior building renovations at the Plaza at Buckland Hills at 1524 Pleasant Valley Road. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reason for the approval is that the proposed activity meets the special exception criteria.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Anderson suggested a workshop preceding the next Commission Meeting to discuss potential rezoning issues on West Middle Turnpike near the Broad Street area. Mr. Stebe said he could make a brief workshop before the next meeting.

Justin Weaver, 10 Trevor Court

Inland Wetlands Permit (2016-129) – Installation of a shed in 100' Upland Review Area

Mr. Bordeaux, the Wetlands Agent, approved this permit.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 29, 2016 –Public Hearing/Business Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Stebe moved to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

RECEIPT OF NEW APPLICATIONS

MICHAEL EVANS – Design Overlay Review (2016-128) – For a building addition and a handicapped accessible ramp at 457 Center Street.

PLAZA AT BUCKLAND HILLS, LLC – Special Exception Modification (2016-131) - Request a special exception modification for exterior building renovations at the Plaza at Buckland Hills at 1524 Pleasant Valley Road.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

December 12, 2016
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS BUSINESS MEETING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.